

critical digest

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The Weekly That Keeps You Informed of the Current Broadway Critical Scene

Second Arena Play Opens

Julius Caesar-Arena, Hotel Edison, 6/20/50. Second three week theatre in the round production stars Basil Rathbone in Shakespeare's drama. Joseph Holland, Alfred Boyer, Berry Kroeger and Horace Braham are featured, Dan Levin staged the production presented by Heilwell and Thomas.

Daily Critics Rate the Revival

The Madwoman of Chaillot-City Center, 6/13/50. Seventeen day stand opened to unanimous reviews from the daily critics. Those who liked it originally thought it was better than ever. Those who weren't too enthusiastic toward the first production, found plenty to praise in the Alfred de Liagre, Jr. presentation of the Maurice Valency adaptation of the the Giraudeau fantasy. Martita Hunt drew braves from all, most agreeing that her performance was better, if not a little bit broader than before. Others winning praise for the fine acting included Nydia Westman, Estelle Winwood, John Carradine and many others. Chapman, News, and Pollock, Compass, thought the play went over very well in the large theatre. Latter would like to see the play about twice a year for many years to come. Rice, Post, considers play a high spot in his theatre going. World Telegram and Sun review delayed due to strike. Herald Tribune didn't cover opening.

Broadway Hits Revisited

Trade paper critics and Morehouse, WT&S, joined the reviewers who raved about Kiss Me, Kate when four new leads were put in. Francis, Billboard, didn't think Danny Daniels came up to expectations in his dancing role, while Hobe, Variety, thought he clicked as newcomer Betty Ann Grove's partner. Anne Jeffreys and Keith Andes won their approval...Ray Bolger and Where's Charley? continue to provide an entertaining musical, notes Hobe, Variety. In spite of several cast changes it is still Bolger's show. At performance caught, the star's ad libs broke up both the cast and the audience...Watts, Post, wonders when the critics will be invited to review Ray Middleton's performance in South Pacific.

T.S. Eliot at Work

ABC Nancy Craig succeeded in snaring a tape recorded interview with T.S. Eliot, author of The Cocktail Party, made at his desk in a London publishing house. Eliot bragged of his East St. Louis heritage, thinks that when an autopsy is performed, the doctors will find smoke from the town's factories embedded in his lungs. He doesn't expect his next play to be anything like any of his other four plays, and he certainly can't understand why anyone would want to be a poet. A person might want to write a poem, but nothing like making a career out of it. The explanation of why he lives in England was simple -- he found himself there already. And he doesn't intend to explain what his current play means to anyone. If man survives the exhaustion of the soil, he concluded, he should continue to produce heroes and artists; and he might even enjoy life.

Critical Notes

W&S temporarily suspended publication Tuesday due to a CIO Newspaper Guild strike both sides predicted a long walkout...Mike Todd is spending \$5,000 to repaint the Szyck caricatures of the critics at the Winter Garden, anticipating good reviews for Peep Show...Rebecca Franklin, wife of WT&S columnist Ward Morehouse, wrote an article on the Arena Theatre for the N.Y. Times magazine...Garland, Journal American, will talk on "The Critic in the Theatre" at Fordham summer session.

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' The Green Room Department '

WATTS WHAT...Disagreeing with Atkinson, Times, makes Watts, Post, feel ashamed of himself, he admitted. But he couldn't resist noting that the Times critic was wrong in comparing the hero of The Show Off to Sinclair Lewis' "Babbitt". Lewis' character was a faker, while Audrey Piper is honest...The Post critic, one of the few to pan The Madwoman of Chaillot at its premiere, felt it would be fairer if he didn't cover the City Center revival.

FREE PLAY IDEA...MBS Gabriel Heatter offers a play idea to the writer who wants a sure fire popular success. Title is "1950-The Last 100 Days". Hero is UN Secretary General Lie who saves the world, via his peace plans, from atomic war.

SUNDRY CAMPAIGNS...The one night a week 7:00 PM curtain time for suburbanites nears reality. Morehouse, WT&S, won support for his project from Theatre Guild's Theresa Helburn...Sam Wenamaker's Repertory Theatre, opening at the Fulton July 24 received the support of Pollock, Compass.

ACTORS ON CRITICS...Movie actors, unlike stage actors, seem ready to discuss critics in public. Two stage actors, turned movie stars, expressed widely diverse opinions on the role of the film critic. Robert Ryan agreed with four Hollywood reporters on ABC Hollywood Round Table that film reviews, good or bad, have little effect on the box office. While James Whitmore told WNBC Critics Corner that the opinions of the critics, especially the N.Y. writers have an important effect on the box office. He also respects their judgments and criticisms on acting.

BESTS & WORSTS...George Jean Nathan picked a few worsts of the season. Mr. Adams was dirtiest, Cayden the silliest, Montserrat the most monotonous, Happy As Larry the most wasteful, and I Know My Love and Texas Li'l Darlin' tied for the most sickening title...Morehouse, WT&S, still contends that The Father was the only well written play presented.

ARENA AUDIENCES...Several critics expressed surprise and embarrassment in viewing the first nighters at such close range at the opening of The Show Off. Watts, Post, and Pollock, Compass, hope that the Arena's second show, Julius Caesar keeps the attention on the actors, not on the audience.

LOST OR STOLEN...Publication of Eugene O'Neill's "so-called" "Lost Plays" was deemed reprehensible and shameful by Brown, SRL. Because O'Neill didn't think enough of these early works to copyright them is no reason why publishers should be allowed to exploit them. New Fathoms Press may or may not be sued by the playwright, but either way Brown thinks their publication is ugly business.

CHECKING THE ADS...Mister Roberts and The Wisteria Trees both used the orchids Walter Winchell bestowed on all the current shows, excepting Death of a Salesman, in ads recently. Ads quoted syndicated columnist accurately.

' Radio, TV & Records '

Shuberts are suing WOR Rudy Vallee for \$500,000 in a slander suit. Vallee on a recent disc jockey show backed up the Justice Department monopoly charges against the Shuberts...Arthur Treacher will be the M.C. on NBC Gilbert & Sullivan disc jockey show Script will be written in rhyme...Broadway actors on strike against WNET Say It with Acting. Demand higher salary on charade program...WNYC is rebroadcasting BBC Third Hour production of Canterbury Tales..."Radio Box Office" is being revamped as a TV series in the fall. Program will sell tickets for eight shows per-month...WNEW Broadway Children will present young stars in scenes from their hit shows, program will plug local charities...WJZ TV presented travel film on Oberammergau Passion Play narrated by Ted Malone...Margaret Webster has signed with Atlantic Records to make all of Shakespeare's plays on long playing records...Columbia recorded two versions of Peter Pan.

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' Off Broadway '
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Trade paper critics and Pollock, Compass, joined other reviewers in praising Studio 7's production of Frank Wedekind's Earth Spirit at the Provincetown Theatre. McDonald; Billboard, thought the play was somewhat dated, but he is sure the erudite will be enchanted by the play's significance. Margaret Feury in the leading role won the acting honors...Gros, Variety, panned Frank Wilson's The Pot Boils, presented by the Actors Theatre as an ineffectual work. Acting performances were termed average...The Elevator Man, a fantasy by Don Orlando Cord and Shirl Hendryx was viewed by "D.C.M.", Wall St. Journal, at the Playwrights Educational Theatre, Adelphi College. Reviewer praised play about life in a very mechanized Utopia.

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' Interview Round Up '
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- JEAN ARTHUR...Peter Pan is more than a little boy who wouldn't grow up, 'the star of the Barrie revival confided to Fields, Mirror. She sees him as truth of the fact that everyone can be free to listen to their own intuitions. People who aren't free aren't aware of the adventure of living. They are walking around like the dead. Fields compared her voice to a running brook -- low, lilting and wistful.
- ALFRED DE LIAGRE, JR...Producer of The Madwoman of Chaillot doesn't think the theatre will ever die, but he deploras a shrinking theatre. The theatre is now a slap dash, makeshift thing, he told Coleman, Mirror. The solution is to encourage young, talented people to really learn their trades.
- SHIRLEY BOOTH...Co-star of Come Back, Little Sheba wishes summer stock producers would do more experimenting with new plays, rather than concentrating on package shows. Guesting on the final broadcast of the season of WOR The Hartmans, she revealed that the script of the William Inge play that was to be produced on Broadway was very different than the script tested in summer stock last year. But they soon realized that the enthusiasms of the writer had been polished out, so they returned to the original before the play opened.
- AUDREY 'OOD...Playwright agent believes that Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie made the success of William Inge's Come Back, Little Sheba possible, she admitted to Hawkins, WT&S. One imaginative play well received makes an audience for another. Williams' recommended both Inge and Carson McCullers to Liebling-Wood Agency.
- ANTHONY FARRELL...Owner of Mark Hellinger Theatre and investor in many shows puts his money in the theatre simply because he likes musical comedies, he told WPIX Danton Walker. He might do a play if an interesting one comes along. Though some of his money making shows have been panned, Farrell doesn't take the critics seriously.
- CONRAD FOWKES, JR...Top man in NYC High School of Performing Arts, the 17 year old actor outlined his plans to MacDougall, WT&S. Because he wants to be a stage actor he has just turned down a Hollywood offer. Instead he is accepting a four year Navy V-12 Scholarship to Yale. He might try "Hamlet" at age 35.

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' Random Notes '
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Association of Theatre Benefit Agents set up Theatre Preview Club offering discount tickets to four previews for a \$3.00 fee. Show of the Month Club also has set up a preview plan...Runyon Cancer Fund is asking \$40,000 for the Rye home of Ezio Pinza...Hollywood bought 11 plays this season for a total of \$1,025,000. A Streetcar Named Desire got the top price of \$350,000 plus a percentage from Charles K. Feldman...Boston's Orpheum is testing one act plays as second half of a double feature bill...American Theatre Wing plans six all star theatre parties to aid hospitalized veterans.

- - - - - ' Key to NYC Criticism At A Glance ' - - - - -

Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them, not if they think they will be hits. "So-So" means the critic did not state directly if he recommended the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening. Photostats of reviews may be obtained at 25 cents each to subscribers, 50 cents each to others.

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| 1. NY Times | 11. Newark News | 21. Catholic World |
| 2. NY Herald Tribune | 12. Women's Wear Daily | 22. Commonweal |
| 3. NY News | 13. Daily Worker | 23. Cue |
| 4. NY Mirror | 14. Wall Street Journal | 24. Chr. Sci. Monitor |
| 5. NY Compass (Pi, Star) | 15. Journal of Commerce | 25. Sat. Review Lit. |
| 6. NY Post | 16. George Jean Nathan | 26. Newsweek |
| 7. NY Sun (Morehouse) | 17. Morning Telegraph | 27. Time |
| 8. NY Journal American | 18. Variety | 28. Nation |
| 9. NY World Telegram and Sun | 19. Billboard | 29. New Republic |
| 10. Brooklyn Eagle | 20. Theatre Arts | 30. New Yorker |

The Cocktail Party-Miller, 1/2/50. Pro: 20 votes. Con: 2-9-14-22-25-29.
So-So: 16-30. None: 13-21.

Come Back, Little Sheba-Booth, 2/15/50. Pro: 16 votes. Con: 2-4-7-12-27.
So-So: 3-6-30. None: 13-15-21-24-25-28.

The Consul-Barrymore, 3/15/50. Pro: 26 votes. Con: 22. So-So: 6-29. None: 21.

Death of a Salesman-Morosco, 2/10/49. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. So-So: 27. None: 5

Detective Story-Hudson, 3/23/49. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 5-10-11-13-16-23-25-28-29.

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes-Ziegfeld, 12/8/49. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 6-21-28.
So-So: 16-19-22-23-27.

The Happy Time-Plymouth, 1/24/50. Pro: 20 votes. Con: 5-6-7-20-26-27-28-30.
None: 13-21.

Kiss Me, Kate-Century-12-31-48. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. None: 28.

Lost in the Stars-Music Box, 10/30/49. Pro: 14 votes. Con: 8-9-13-20-21-22-24-25-28-29-30. So-So: 4-27. None: 16.

The Member of the Wedding-Empire, 1/5/50. Pro: 25 votes. Con: 16.
So-So: 2-27-30. None: 21.

Mister Roberts-Alvin, 2/13/48. Pro: 24 votes. Con: 21-24. So-So: 13-16-17.
None: 28.

Peter Pan-Imperial, 4/24/50. Pro: 19 votes. Con: 8-16-30. So-So: 6-14-19.
None: 13-20-21-28.

South Pacific-Majestic, 4/8/49. Pro: 19 votes. Con: 27. So-So: 23.
None: 5-10-11-13-14-16-22-28-29.

Texas Li'l Derlin'-Hellinger, 11/25/49. Pro: 12 votes. Con: 1-4-7-8-18-19-23-29-30. So-So: 2-5-10-11-20-26-27. None: 25-28.

Where's Charley?-St. James, 10/11/48. Pro: 16 votes. Con: 6-7-12-13-16-19-22-24-25-26. So-So: 4-27. None: 10-28.

The Wisteria Trees-Martin Beck, 3/29/50. Pro: 14 votes. Con: 2-7-9-10-16-22-23-25-26-27-28-30. So-So: 18-29. None: 13-21.

Tickets Please!-Coronet, 4/27/50. Pro: 20 votes. Con: 11-16-29-30. So-So: 26.

